A Lasallian Martyr of the 20th. Century

Br. James Miller, FSC
Ellis (Wisconsin, USA), September 21, 1944
Huehuetenango (Guatemala), February 13, 1982

Br. Rodolfo Cosimo Meoli, FSC
Postulator General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools
Generalate, Rome

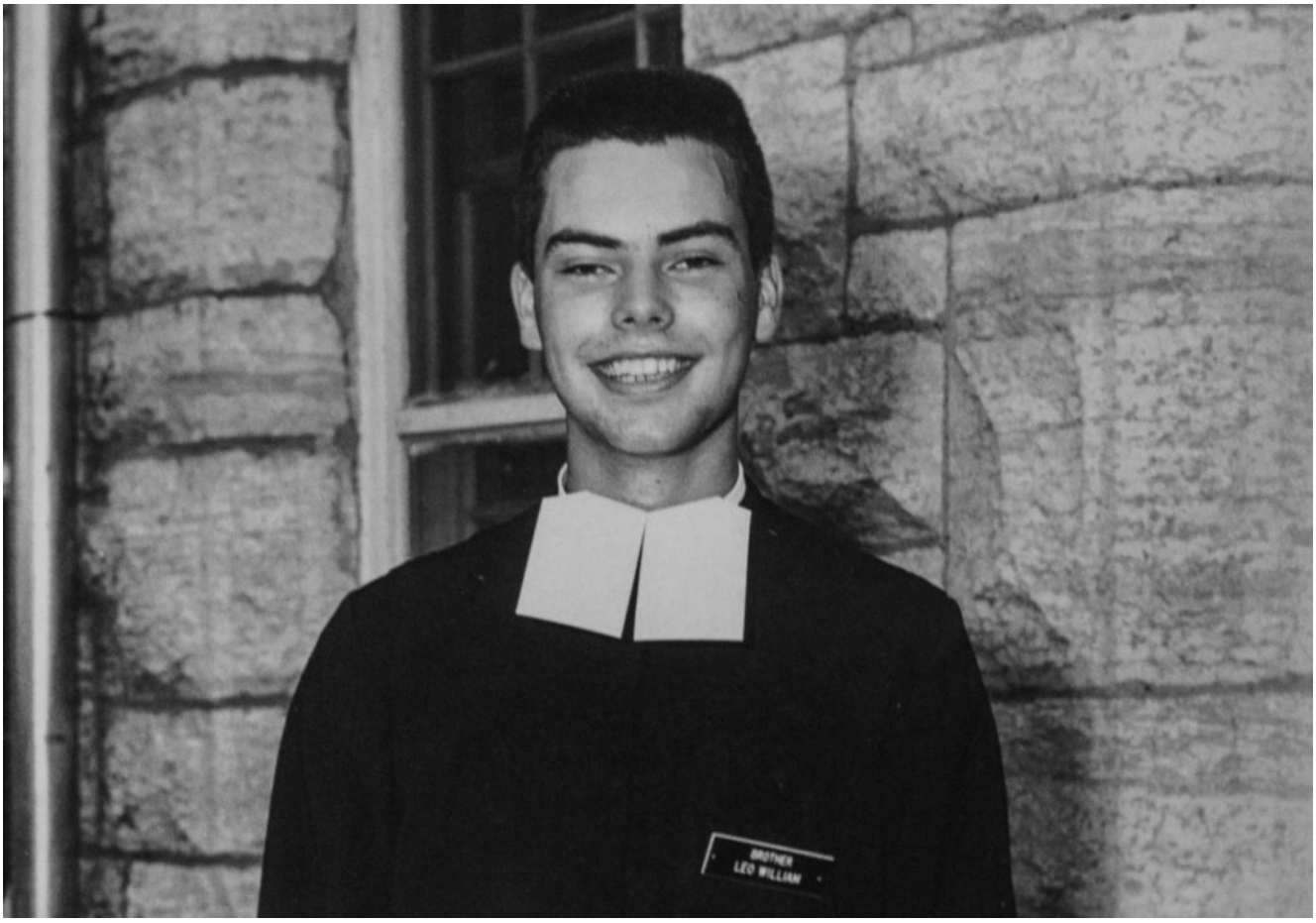
On December 7 in Huehuetenango (Guatemala) the beatification of Brother James Miller will be celebrated. Earlier, the diocesan investigation was opened in September 2009 and approved in 2018 by the Congress of Theologians, Cardinals and Bishops.



En la tarde del 13 de febrero de 1982, mientras los muchachos de la Casa Indígena La Salle de Huehuetenango (Guatemala) se preparaban para la celebración del carnaval, el Hermano intentó fijar una lámpara en la pared exterior de la casa. Subió a una escalera y empezó a trabajar. Apenas había comenzado, cuando tres personas llegaron desde una esquina de la calle. Uno de ellos le disparó en la garganta, el pecho y el lado derecho de su cuerpo. La muerte fue inmediata. La intervención de los jóvenes que habían oído los disparos fue infructuosa.

In the afternoon of February 13, 1982, while the boys of the *La Salle Casa Indígena* in Huehuetenango (Guatemala) were preparing for the celebration (Carnival) the following day, Brother James was fixing a lamp on the outside wall of the house. Climbing on a ladder, he started working. He had just begun, when three people arrived from a street corner. One of them shot him in the throat, chest and right side. He died instantly. The intervention of the boys who had heard the shots was desperate and useless.

We never knew who the murderers were, partly because the testimonies of those who had witnessed the scene were confusing and contradictory.



James
Miller or “Hermano Santiago”, as he was known to Lasallians in
Central America, was born on September 21, 1944 in Ellis, a small town in Wisconsin, in the Midwestern part of the United States. He grew up in a good family, had a joyful and fulfilled character; he was simple and enthusiastic, full of energy, tireless in his work. He attended primary school in his home town, then *Pacelli High School* in
Stevens Point, run by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. That’s where he discovered
his vocation.

He joined
the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in 1959. Intellectual and religious formation took place first in Glencoe, Missouri where the Brothers’ house of formation was located, and then at *Saint Mary’s University* in Winona. After his perpetual religious
profession in 1969, he decided to leave the United States and go on to the missions. His missionary commitment began in Nicaragua. He remained there until
1980. He was particularly active, especially when he was the director in charge

of the Cristóbal Colón school, owned by the government but run by the Brothers. His remarkable abilities have given him prestige in the eyes of local leaders, to such an extent that they have entrusted him with the task of building ten rural schools. He dealt not only with local politicians, but also with members of the government and with President Somoza himself.

Things
changed when Somoza was ejected from power and had to give up the country's leadership. The superiors at that time called Brother Santiago back to the United States. He stayed there for only one year, but always with his heart and mind in this missionary land. In fact, he asked to return to Central America. In early 1981, his superiors accepted his request, but they assigned him to Guatemala, in the city of Huehuetenango, to the La Salle Indigenous Center, a school composed solely of children from the countryside. It had been just over a year since he arrived when, on February 10, 1982, the father of one of the indigenous
Guatemalan Brothers went to the Center to warn the community that he had heard
that someone was planning the murder of the Deputy Director. Brother James, having already experienced difficult situations in Nicaragua and thinking that he could not be the target, continued his work until February 13, 1982.

The liturgical feast will take place on February 13, the day of his martyrdom.



In June 2019, his body was exhumed and placed in the small church of Saint Martin in Ellis, not far from his birthplace. It will be the sanctuary dedicated to him.

05/09/2009: Opening of the diocesan investigation in Huehuetenango – Servant of God

15/12/2009: Nihil Obstat of the Holy See

09/07/2010: Decree on the validity of the diocesan survey

Speaker: P. Zdzislaw Kijas, OFM Conv.

16/12/2016 : The “Positio super martyrio” is submitted to the opinion of the 9 Theological Consultants.

20/03/2018: Congress of Theologians – All give a positive vote

02/10/2018: Opinion of the cardinals and bishops – All give a positive vote

08/11/2018: Decree “Super Martyrio”

(Original text freely modified by Ilaria Iadeluca, Director of Communication, Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Rome)

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Casa Indígena La Salle en Huehuetenango (Guatemala)

Distrito Centroamérica-Panamá

RELAN – Lasallian Region of North America

Brief biography of Brother James Miller
